DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 219 160 PS 012 980

TITLE	National Study of the Incidence and Severity of Child Abuse and Neglect: Executive Summary.
INSTITUTION	Development Associates, Inc., Arlington, Va.; Westat Research, Inc., Rockville, Md.
SPONS AGENCY	National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (DHHS/OHDS), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	82
CONTRACT	HEW-105-76-1137
NOTE	19p.
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Age Differences; *Child Abuse; *Child Neglect; Definitions; Identification; *Incidence; National Surveys; Rural Urban Differences; Sex Differences
IDENTIFIERS	*Sexual Abuse

ABSTRACT

To project national estimates of the incidence and severity of child abuse and neglect in the United States, data were collected on suspected incidents occuring in a sample of 26 counties located in 10 states. The sample included urban, suburban, and rural counties scattered across the nation. In each county, data were collected from the local child protective services agency and from other community institutions for a 12-month period beginning May, 1979, and ending April, 1980. A unique characteristic of this national study was the fact that common definitions of child abuse and child neglect were used for data collection. These definitions required that a child suffer "demonstrable" physical or emotional harm in order to be counted as abused or neglected. Information was gathered on 21 individual forms of child maltreatment. For purposes of analysis these were grouped into six major forms assessing physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, physical neglect, educational neglect, and emotional neglect. In addition to forms of maltreatment, data were gathered concerning the incidence and severity of maltreatment, age and sex of victims, demographic variables, and case recognition and reporting. It is concluded that child abuse and neglect in the United States is an underreported problem of major proportions and that no category of children is "immune" to maltreatment. (RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Office of Human Development Services
Administration for Children, Youth and Families
Children's Bureau
National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

hds
human development services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

National Study of the Incidence and Severity of Child Abuse and Neglect

ED219160

PS 012980

National Study of the Incidence and Severity of Child Abuse and Neglect: Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes findings of the National Study of the Incidence and Severity of Child Abuse and Neglect. This study, commonly referred to as the National Incidence Study, was supported by the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974, (P.L. 93-247) directed the National Center to "make a complete and full study and investigation of the national incidence of child abuse and neglect. . . " (Section 2 (6)). Initial conceptual work on the National Incidence Study began in 1975; the data was collected between May 1979 and April 1980; and the study was completed in December 1980. The study was carried out by Westat, Inc. and Development Associates, Inc., under Contract No. HEW-105-76-1137.

The study methodology involved the collection of data on suspected incidents of child abuse and neglect occurring in a sample of 26 U.S. counties located in 10 States. The sample included urban, suburban and rural counties scattered across the nation from the East Coast to the West Coast. In each county, data were collected from the local child protective services agency for a 12-month period (May 1979-April 1980); in addition, data were collected from other community institutions (e.g., schools, hospitals, police, courts) for a four-month period during the Fall and Winter of 1979-80. Common definitions of child abuse and child neglect were used for data collection by the nearly 600 participating agencies in the 26 counties. These definitions focused upon relatively clear-cut and serious "maltreatment" situations—ones in which the child had experienced, during the study period, clearly avoidable injury, illness, or emotional/behavioral impairment as a foreseeable result of purposive acts or extreme inattention by a parent or other in-home adult caretaker. In addition to physical injury or emotional impairment, the study definitions included truancy (averaging more than five days per month) and other child behavior problems (e.g., delinquency, prostitution, drug abuse), but only if the problem were clearly debilitating and chronic and if the parents or other adult caretakers were made aware of the problem and had made no effort to correct it. In brief, these definitions required that a child suffer "demonstrable" physical or emotional harm in order to be counted as abused or neglected.

The data collected from the sample counties were used to project national estimates of the incidence and severity of child abuse and neglect. These estimates are presented in this report. The components of each of the six major forms of maltreatment are presented in Table 1.

The National Incidence Study is a milestone in research on child abuse and neglect. It is the first national study of child abuse and neglect which has used common and consistent definitions at all data collection sites. The findings of this study will be useful in a variety of ways by program managers and planners in the field of child abuse and neglect at local, State and Federal levels.

Table 1. Forms of Maltreatment Encompased by the National Incidence Study

Physical Abuse
1. Assault with implement (e.g., knife, strap, cigarette)
2. Assault without implement (e.g., hit with fist, bite or means of assault unknown

Sexual Abuse
3. Intrusion (acts involving penile penetration—oral, anal or genital; e.g., rape, incest)
4. Molestation with genital contact
5. Other or unknown

Emotional Abuse
6. Verbal or emotional assault (e.g., threatening, belittling)
7. Close confinement (e.g., tying, locking in closet)
8. Other or unknown (e.g., attempted physical or sexual assault)

Physical Neglect
9. Abandonment
10. Other refusal of custody (e.g., expulsion, refusal to accept custody of runaway)

Physical Neglect (cont'd)
11. Refusal to allow or provide needed care for diagnosed illness, health condition or impairment
12. Unwarranted delay or failure to seek needed remedial health care
13. Inadequate physical supervision
14. Disregard of avoidable hazards in home (e.g., exposed wiring, broken glass)
15. Inadequate nutrition, clothing or hygiene
16. Other (e.g., reckless disregard of child's safety such as driving while intoxicated)

Educational Neglect
17. Knowingly "permitted" chronic truancy
18. Other (e.g., repeatedly kept child home, failed to enroll)

Emotional Neglect
19. Inadequate nurturance/affection (e.g., failure-to-thrive)
20. Knowingly "permitted" maladaptive behavior (e.g., delinquency, serious drug/alcohol abuse)
21. Other (e.g., refusal to allow needed remedial care for diagnosed emotional problem)

FINDINGS

Incidence of Child Maltreatment

Based on the data collected for the National Incidence Study, we project that *at least 652,000 children are abused and/or neglected annually* in the United States. Stated in terms of an incidence rate, our estimate is that *10.5 children* are abused and/or neglected annually *for each 1000* U.S. children under the age of 18 years.[1]

The projection means that had we implemented the study's data collection procedures in all 3,000 U.S. counties, approximately 652,000 children meeting the study's operational definitions of abuse and neglect would have been identified. Of the "in-scope" children (i.e., projected number of children meeting the study's definitions), 212,400 would have been known to the local child protective services (CPS) agencies. [See Level 1 in Table 2.] An additional 71,400 children (beyond those known to CPS agencies) would have been known to "other investigating agencies." [See Level 2 in Table 2.] An additional 368,100 children (beyond those known to Level 1 and Level 2 agencies) would have been known to professionals in "other study agencies." [See Level 3 in Table 2.]

As indicated in Table 2, the total number of "in-scope" children known to one or more agencies included in Levels 1, 2 and 3 is 652,000. Beyond these children are additional children known to agencies not included in the study and/or to private individuals, but not known to any agency included in Levels 1, 2 or 3. [See Level 4 in Table 2.] Finally, some abused and/or neglected children are not recognized as such by anyone. [See Level 5 in Table 2.] The study was not designed to collect data

Table 2. Computation of the National Estimate of "In-Scope" Children[1]

Level of Recognition	National Estimate of "In-Scope" Children[2]
Level 1: Children known to CPS agencies	212,400
Level 2: Children known to "other investigating agencies" but not known to Level 1 agencies	71,400
Level 3: Children known to "other study agencies," but not known to Level 1 or 2 agencies	368,100
Total Children: Levels 1, 2 and 3	652,000[3]
Level 4: Children known to "non-study agencies" and/or private individuals, but not known to Level 1 or 2 or 3 agencies	No estimate[4]
Level 5: Children known to no one	No estimate[4]

[1]These estimates are based on the 12-month period May 1979-April 1980 (i.e., the number of maltreated children based on the study's definitions).

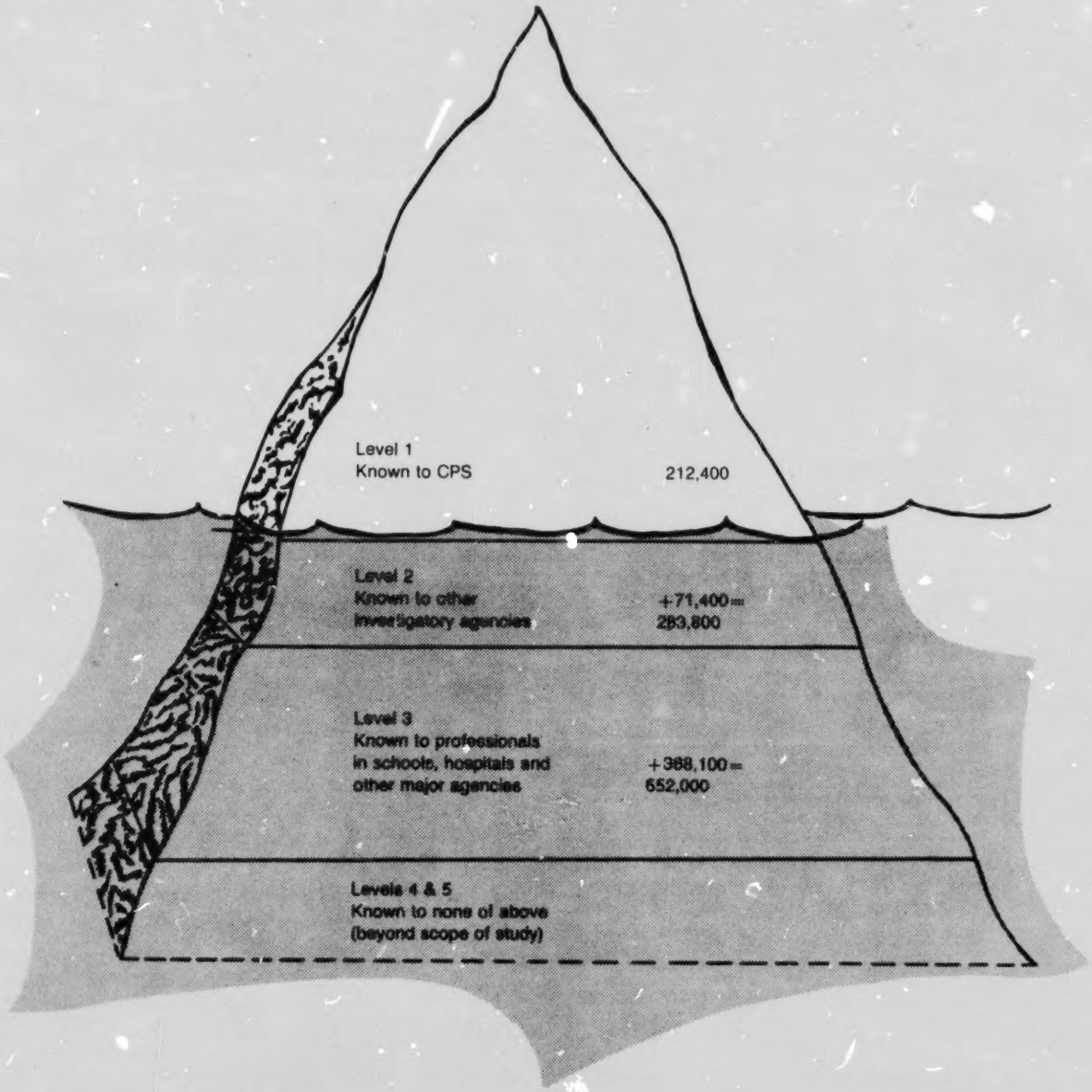
[2]For convenience, all estimates have been rounded off to the nearest 100.

[3]For convenience, the total number has been rounded to the nearest 1000.

[4]The study obtained no information from Levels 4 and 5.

[1] "Incidence rate" is a term which uses the number of children with a particular characteristic counted in the study as the numerator with the number of children with that characteristic found in the general child population as the denominator: times 1000. For instance, "abused 15-17 year olds/total numberof 15-17 year olds" times 1000.

Figure 1. Conceptual Presentation of the Recognition of "In-scope" Maltreated Children: An Iceberg



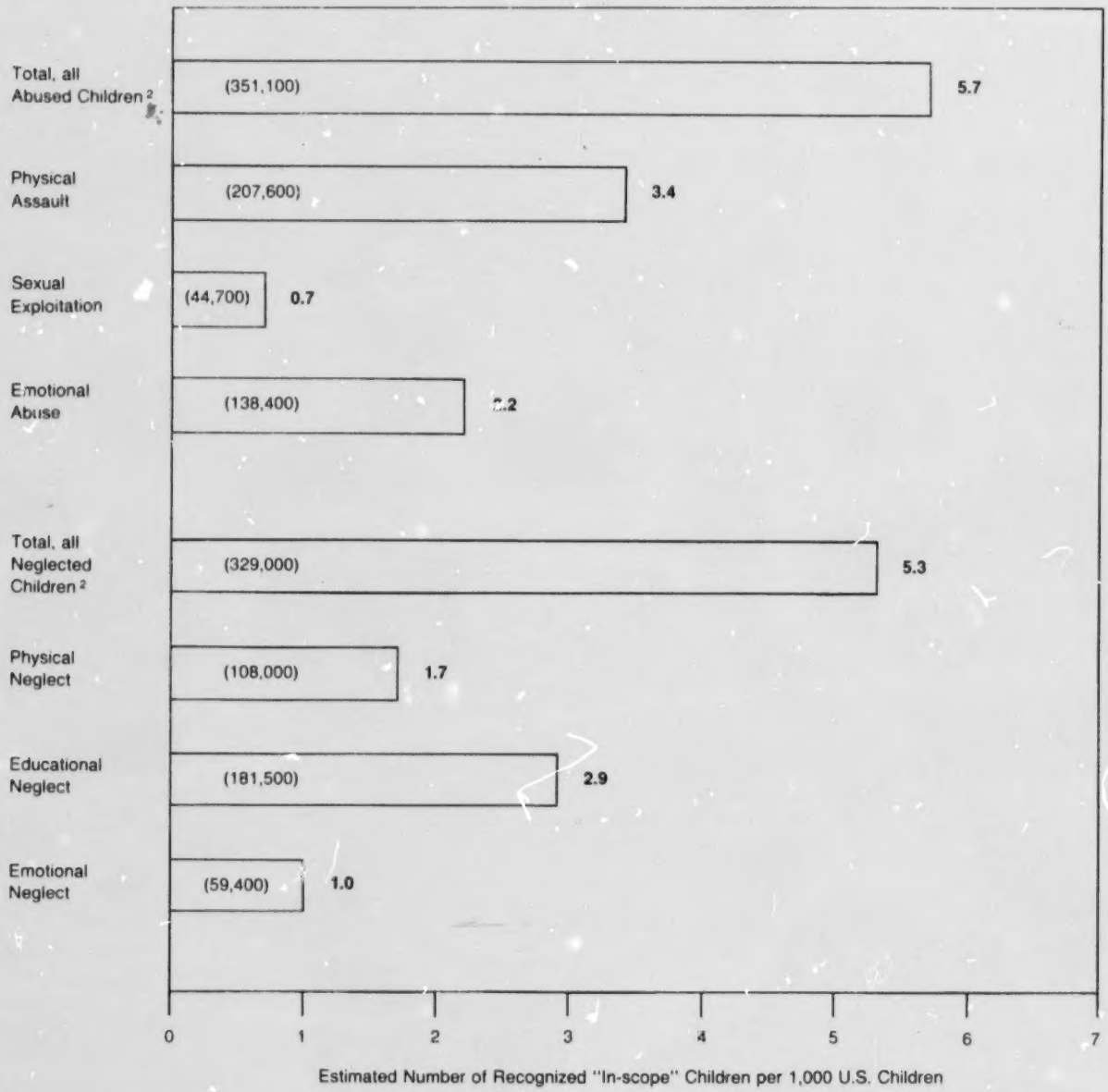
for Levels 4 and 5, but—theoretically at least—some unknown number of additional abused and neglected children could be identified from these last two levels.

The information contained in Table 2 is presented more graphically in Figure 1 in the form of an iceberg. While we do not know the precise size of the iceberg, we do know that a substantial number of "in-scope" maltreated children are found "below the surface;" i.e., many such children are not known to the local child protective services agencies.

The National Center's estimate of 652,000 abused and neglected U.S. children is *a bare minimum* number. We believe actual incidence of child abuse and neglects substantially higher than 652,000.[2]

[2] Very likely, the actual number of children abused and neglected annually in the U.S. is *at least 1,000,000.* The basis for this statement is as follows: The National Incidence Study found that, for the non-CPS agencies included in the study (i.e., Level 2 and 3 agencies), only one-fifth of the "in-scope" children reported to the study were also reported to the local CPS agency. If the Level 4 agencies and individuals had been included in the study design, and they too reported to CPS only one-fifth of the "in-scope" children known to them, then the overall estimate would be that 1,000,000 children are abused and neglected annually in the U.S.

Figure 2. National Incidence Rates and Incidence Numbers by Major Form of Child Maltreatment [1]



[1] The estimated number of children in each category is presented in parentheses.
[2] The total is less than the sum of these subcategories because some children experienced more than one form of maltreatment.

The study's estimate is a bare minimum for four major reasons:

- The study's definitions are intentionally very strict—as the intent of the study was to count only children who definitely (or most likely) suffered demonstrable harm due to child abuse and neglect. Thus, children brought to the attention of the study, about whom a reasonable doubt existed regarding whether harm occurred, or regarding the cause of the harm, were not counted. It is likely, however, that some of the children excluded from the study because of such doubts had been abused or neglected.
- No information from Level 4 sources (e.g., private schools, day care centers, medical clinics, and private individuals) was collected during the study. No doubt, additional "in-scope" children would have been reported to the study had we gone to such other sources.
- The extent of "real" participation in the study by some of the Level 2 and Level 3 agencies involved in the

data collection varied enormously. For instance, at one extreme, several "participating" agencies in large urban and suburban counties identified *no* suspected children to the study, while, in contrast, many smaller agencies identified 20 to 50 children each. It is highly likely that the wide variation is not explained solely by differences in the number of maltreated children encountered by the different agencies. Rather, a substantial part of the variation is likely explained by differences in the agencies' interest in, and enthusiasm for, this entirely voluntary study. Had a high level of participation been attained in all study agencies, it is very probable that additional "in-scope" children would have been reported to the study.

- Only children on reports of child abuse and neglect that were substantiated by a CPS agency were defined as "in-scope" for purposes of this study. That is, the study did not examine unsubstantiated cases to determine whether or not they were "in-scope." (Programmatically, in many cases, the study *could not* examine such cases, because of lack of available information.) Therefore, it is likely that some of these unsubstantiated incidents were not included because of insufficient evidence or inability to investigate, but should have been.

Although 652,000 is a conservative estimate of the total number of U.S. children maltreated annually, we have chosen to use it as the baseline figure for the analyses to be presented in the remainder of this report.

Forms of Maltreatment

The study gathered information on 21 individual forms of child maltreatment. For purposes of analysis, these were aggregated into six major forms. The number of children harmed by each of these six major forms of maltreatment is presented in Figure 2, along with the incidence rate for each form. The key findings are:

- The number of abused children and the number of neglected children are approximately the same.
- Physical assault is the most common form of abuse—more than half of the abused children were physically assaulted.
- Educational neglect is the most common form of neglect—more than half of the neglected children were educationally neglected.

The finding that abuse and neglect are equally common runs counter to the general impressions and the experience of some CPS agencies. However, had we not used very strict definitions which required demonstrable harm to a child, considerably more neglect than abuse might have been found.

Severity of Maltreatment

The severity of each "in-scope" child's maltreatment related to injury or impairment was evaluated using the information provided to the study, in a narrative description (part of the study's data collection instruments), by a professional in a Level 1, 2 or 3 agency. The number of children in each of the four severity categories is presented in Figure 3, along with the national incidence rate for each category. "Serious" means severe enough to require professional care. "Moderate" means injuries or impairments which remain observable for at least 48 hours. "Probable" means that it is highly likely that the child's physical, mental or emotional health or capabilities were significantly impaired as a result of the extreme nature of the maltreatment. The key finding with respect to severity is:

- At least 84% of the 652,000 "in-scope" children (i.e., all except the "probable" cases) were moderately or more severely injured or impaired.[3,4]

Based on the data collected in the study, it is estimated that roughly 1,000 children die each year as a result of a child maltreatment-related injury or impairment. This estimate for fatalities must be tentative, since it is based on a very small number of actual deaths in the 26 sample counties where data were collected.[5]

Age and Sex of Maltreated Children

The study's estimates of the age distribution of the "in-scope" children are presented in Figure 4. The key findings with respect to age are:

- Substantial numbers of children of all ages are abused/neglected.
- The maltreatment incidence rate for adolescents is more than twice the rate for preschool children.[6]
- The maltreatment rate for elementary school age children is nearly twice the rate for preschool children.[6]

Ages of maltreated children were examined in relation to the severity of the injury/impairment. Table 3 shows the percentage distribution of children by age in the general population, by the "in-scope" group and by the severity of impairment. The key findings are:

- Preschool children, ages 0–5 years, are 28% of the general child population and 17% of the "in-scope" group, but sustain a disproportionately high 74% of fatalities.

---

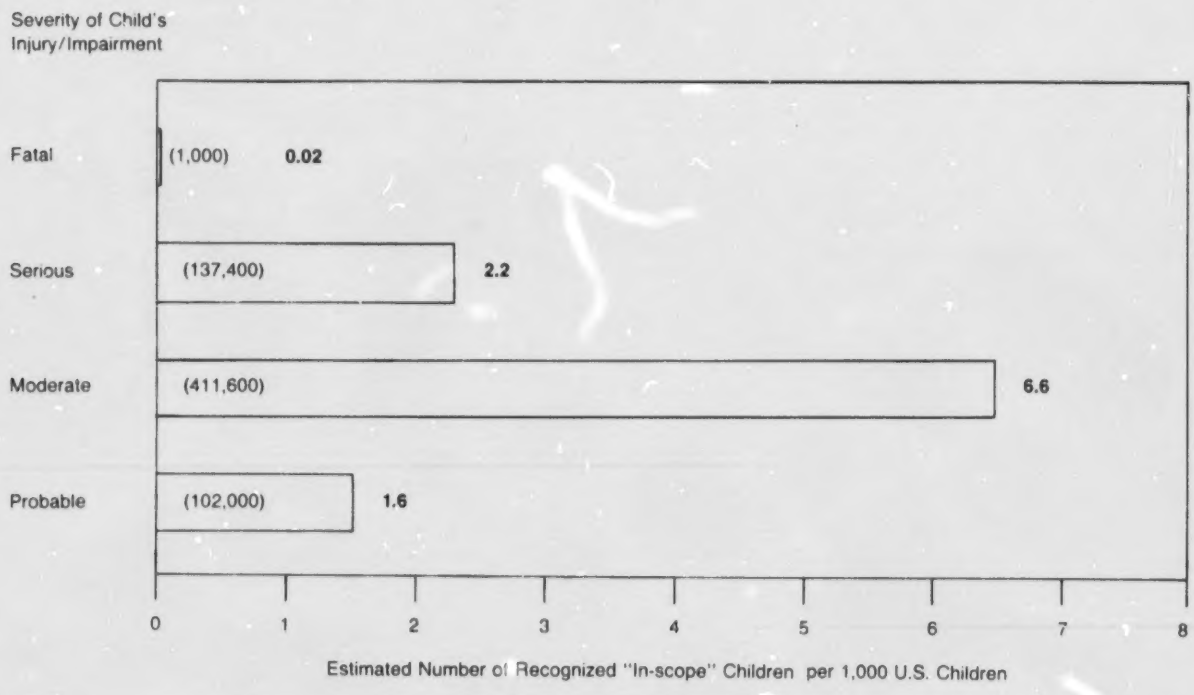
[3]The "probable" category should not be interpreted as including cases less serious than those in the "moderate" category. For if sufficient information had been available to assess the "probable" cases, many would be classified as "serious," while all or almost all of the remainder would be classified as "moderate."

[4]It must be remembered that the study included only situations which resulted in demonstrable harm by definition.

[5]Evidence from other sources would lead us to believe that the estimate of 1,000 abuse and neglect related deaths annually is low.

[6]The study methodology may have skewed the age distribution, since many of the community professionals tend to "see" older children.

Figure 3. National Incidence Rates and Incidence Numbers by Severity of Maltreatment-related Injury or Impairment[1]



[1] The estimated number of children in each category is presented in parentheses.

- Children ages 6–14 years are 52% of the general child population and 57% of the "in-scope" group, but sustain a disproportionately low, 3% of the fatalities.
- Older adolescents, 15–17 years, represent 19% of the general child population are slightly overrepresented in the "in-scope" group and in all levels of injury/impairment.

The study's estimates of the sex distribution of the "in-scope" children are presented in Figure 5. The key finding is:

- The incidence rates for males and for females are virtually identical when all forms of maltreatment are considered.

However, the set of charts in Figure 6 reveals important age and sex differences when related to type of maltreatment. The key findings are:

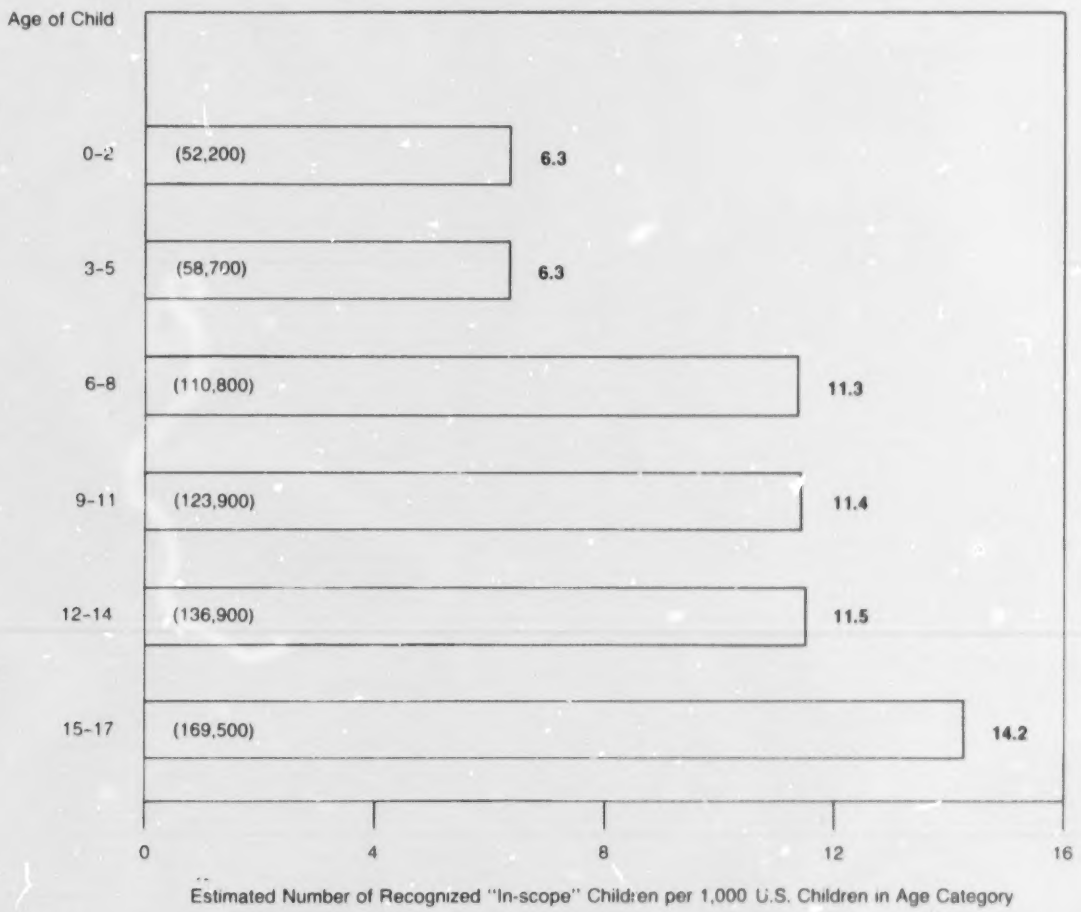
- In general, the incidence rate for maltreatment increases with age. However, there are two exceptions:
  (1) The incidence rate for physical abuse of males decreases with age, above the 3–5 year age group; and
  (2) The incidence rate for physical neglect of both males and females is relatively constant and similar for age groups over 0–2 years.
- Adolescent females, ages 12–17 years, are more likely to experience all forms of abuse compared to their male counterparts.
- Adolescent males, ages 12–17 years, are more likely to experience educational and emotional neglect than are adolescent females, but they are slightly less likely to experience physical neglect than are adolescent females.
- The incidence rate for sexual abuse is highest among adolescent females (aged 12–17), but half the female victims of sexual abuse are younger (aged 0–11).

Table 3. Percentage Distribution of Children by Age—General Population, "In-Scope," and Severity of Injury/Impairment

Age	Percent General Population	Percent "In-Scope"	Severity of Injury/Impairment			
			Percent Fatal	Percent Serious	Percent Moderate	Percent Probable
0 - 2	13	8	49	16	5	10
3 - 5	15	9	25	7	9	13
6 - 8	16	17	2	17	18	15
9 - 11	17	19	0	19	18	20
12-14	19	21	1	14	23	20
15-17	19	26	23	27	27	22
Total	99[1]	100	100	100	100	100

[1] Numbers have been rounded.

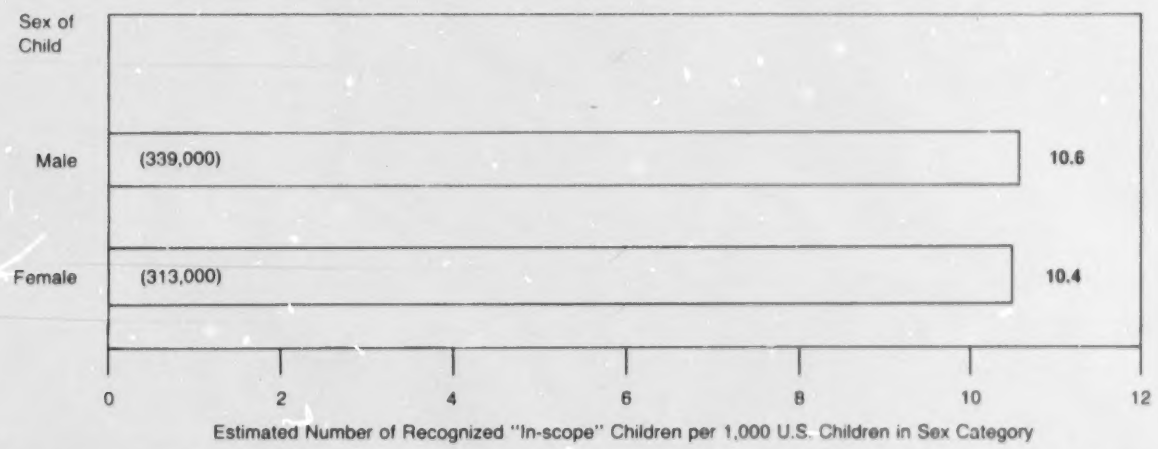
Figure 4. National Incidence Rates and Incidence Numbers [1] by Age of Maltreated Children [2]



[1] The estimated number of children in each category is presented in parentheses.

[2] Age of child was reported on 99% of the "in-scope" children. The age distribution of the missing 1% was assumed to be identical to that of the reported 99%.

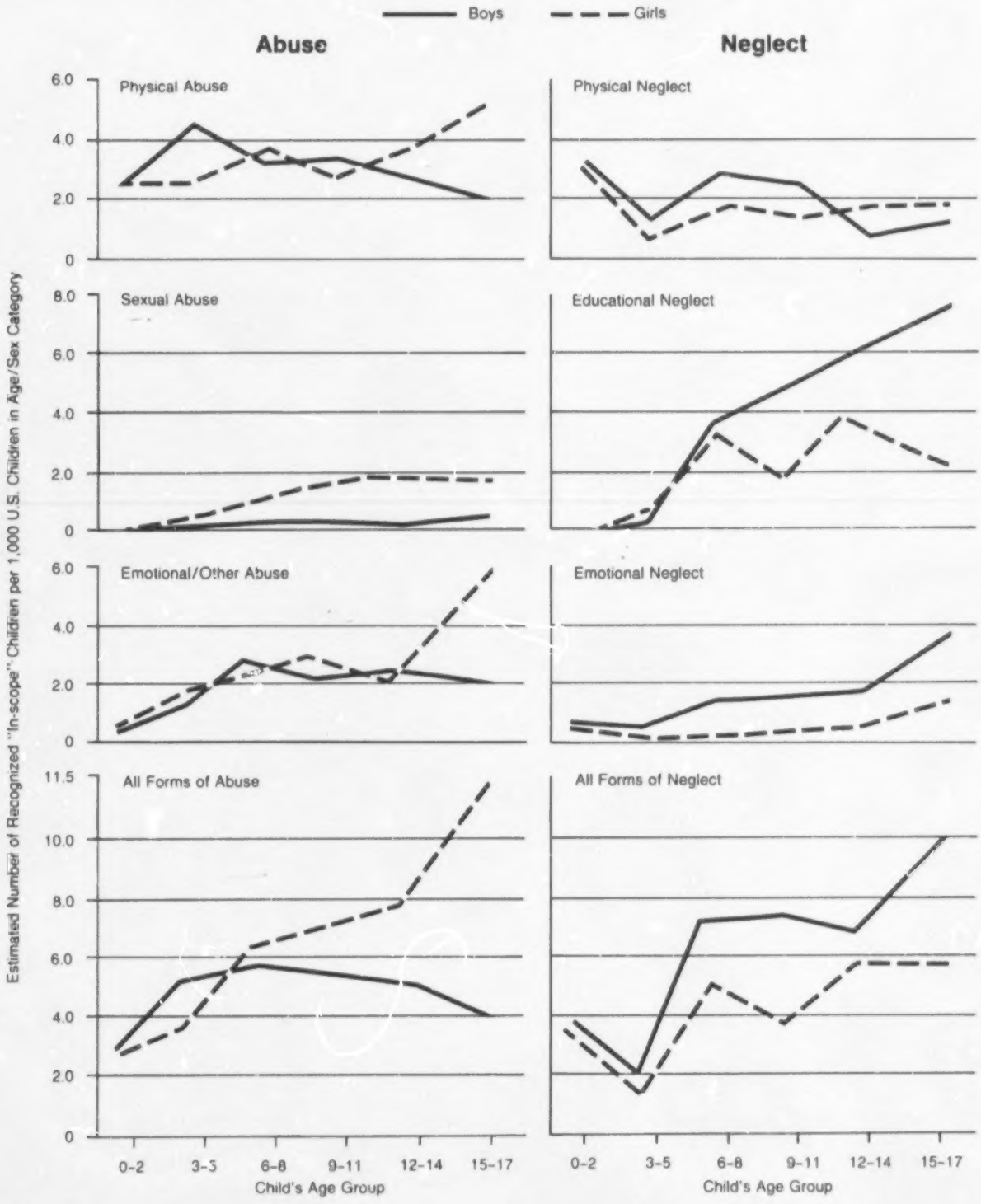
Figure 5. National Incidence Rate and Incidence Numbers [1] by Sex of Maltreated Children [2]



[1] The estimated number of children in each category is presented in parentheses.

[2] Sex of child was reported on 99% of the "in-scope" children. The sex composition of the missing 1% was assumed to be identical to that of the reported 99%.

Figure 6. National Incidence Rates for Major Forms of Maltreatment by Age and Sex of Maltreated Children



Income, Race and Geographic Setting of Maltreated Children

Among other information gathered from the professionals involved in the study, we asked for an estimate of the annual income of the maltreated child's family. For 19% of the "in-scope" children, no estimate was made (i.e., the professional reporting on the child did not make such an estimate). For the remaining 81%, where this information was available, the basis for making the estimate is not known—but may include some subjective elements (e.g., child's clothing, child's race, parent's facility with the English language). In brief, the manner in which family income information was collected makes these data less reliable than the other demographic information collected on the maltreated children. In spite of such reservations regarding the data quality, the findings on family income are dramatic enough that it is unlikely that they can be explained solely in terms of deficiencies in the data.

The study's estimates of the family income of the maltreated children are presented in Figure 7. The key findings are:

- Maltreated children can be found in all income groups.
- Children from low income families are much more likely to suffer maltreatment than are children from high income families. This finding would tend to corroborate the hypothesis that various environmental and family stresses associated with low-income contributes to the maltreatment of children.

The study's estimates of the racial composition of the "in-scope" children are presented in Figure 8. The key finding is:

- The incidence rates for blacks and for whites are almost identical.[7]

In the United States, race and income are related. Therefore, we examined the association between race and family income of the maltreated children and forms of maltreatment. A set of charts describing these relationships is presented in Figure 9. The key findings are:

- For middle and upper income families (i.e., families with estimated annual incomes of $15,000 or more), incidence rates for white children are virtually identical to those for nonwhite children. (This is true for each major form of maltreatment.)
- For lower income families (i.e., families with incomes less than $15,000), incidence rates for white children are substantially higher than those for nonwhite children. (This is true for each major form of maltreatment, with the exception of educational neglect.)
- For each major form of maltreatment, incidence rates for white children are much higher in lower income families than in higher income families.
- For nonwhite children, neglect incidence rates are much higher in lower income families than in higher income families. In contrast, abuse incidence rates are close to constant, at a relatively low level, across income levels for nonwhite children.

The study's estimates of the incidence of child maltreatment in different county types are presented in Figure 10. The key finding is:

- No geographic setting is free of child abuse and neglect. In fact, the incidence rates are similar for urban, suburban and rural communities.

Although the overall incidence rates varied little by county type, the distribution of the major forms of maltreatment did vary. The most significant variations are:

- The incidence rate for sexual abuse is higher in rural counties than elsewhere.
- The incidence rate for educational neglect is higher in urban counties than elsewhere.
- The incidence rate for emotional neglect is higher in suburban counties than elsewhere.

Recognition and Reporting of Maltreated Children

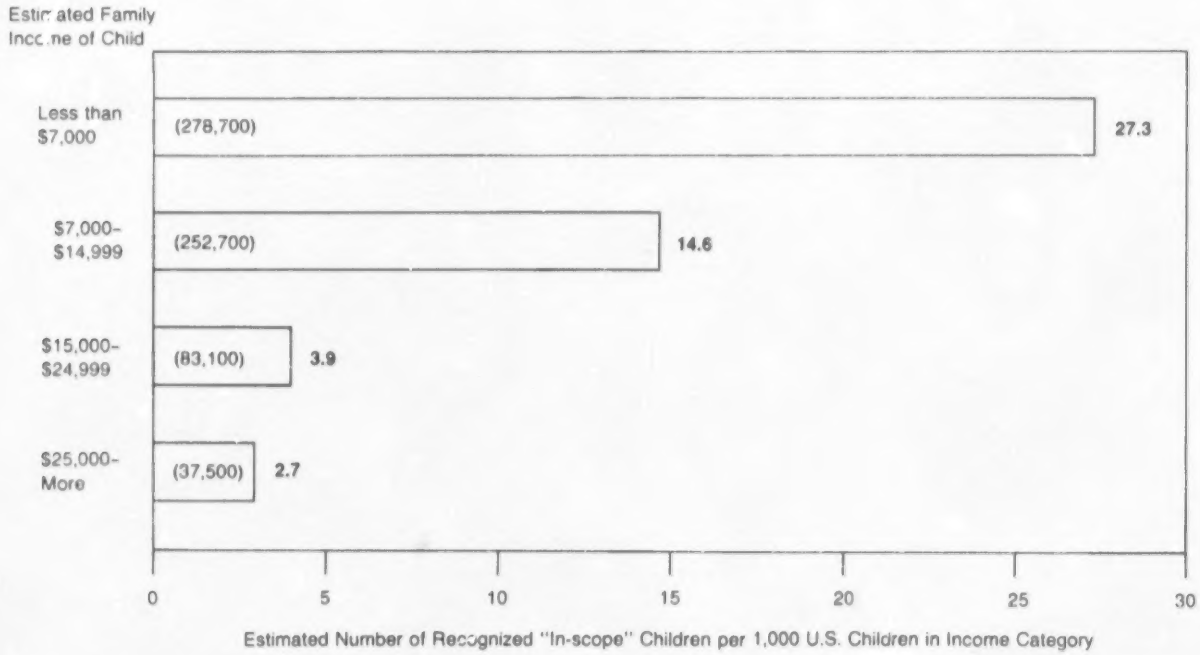
As indicated in the introduction to this report, data on maltreated children were obtained from local child protective services (CPS) agencies as well as from a variety of other community sources (referred to in this report as "non-CPS agencies").[8] Based on the data collected in the 26 sample counties, we have estimated a national annual total of 652,000 "in-scope" children. The source of reports on these children is presented in Figure 11. The key findings regarding source of reports are as follows:

- Reports made from participating non-CPS agencies (Level 2 and 3) to CPS agencies accounted for 56% of

[7]Few children from other racial categories were identified in the study. As a result, no projections could be drawn about other ethnicity groups.

[8]See Table 2.

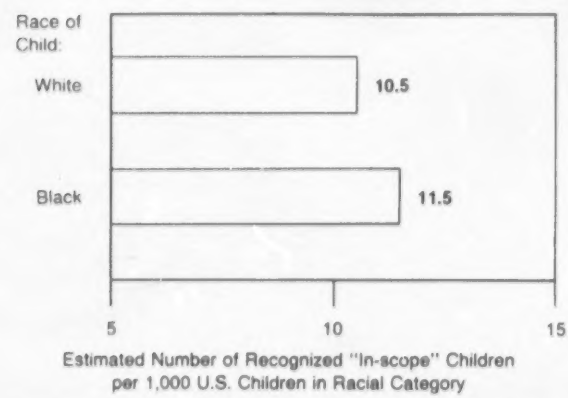
Figure 7. National Incidence Rates and Incidence Numbers[1] by Estimated Annual Family Income of Maltreated Children[2]



[1] The estimated number of children in each category is presented in parentheses.

[2] Estimated annual family income of child was reported on 81% of the "in-scope" children. The family income composition of the missing 19% was assumed to be identical to that of the reported 81%.

Figure 8. National Incidence Rates and Incidence Numbers[1] by Race[2] of Maltreated Children[3]



[1] The estimated number of children in each category is presented in parentheses.

[2] Children of races other than black or white are not presented here, as insufficient information was available on these "other" races.

[3] Race of child was reported on 99% of the "in-scope" children. The racial composition of the missing 1% was assumed to be indentical to that of the reported 99%.

all "in-scope" children reported to CPS agencies (118,700/212,400).

- Participating non-CPS agencies (Level 2 and 3) reported only 21% of the recognized "in-scope" children to Level 1, CPS agencies (118,700/558,200). Thus, the majority of children who were recognized by persons in a variety of community agencies as maltreated, were not known to the local CPS agencies.

The 558,200 "in-scope" children reported to the study—either directly or via CPS—by non-CPS agencies were not evenly distributed among agency types. The distribution is presented in Figure 12. The key findings are:

- Public schools are the source of 65% (i.e., 363,400/558,200) of the "in-scope" children reported by non-CPS agencies.
- The schools are, in fact, the source of *more than half* (i.e., 363,400/652,000, which is 56%) of *all* the reports on "in-scope" children made to the study from *all* sources.
- Each other non-CPS agency type is the source of less than 10% of the "in-scope" children reported by non-CPS agencies.

Figure 9. National Incidence Rates for Major Forms of Maltreatment by Race and Estimated Annual Family Income of Maltreated Children

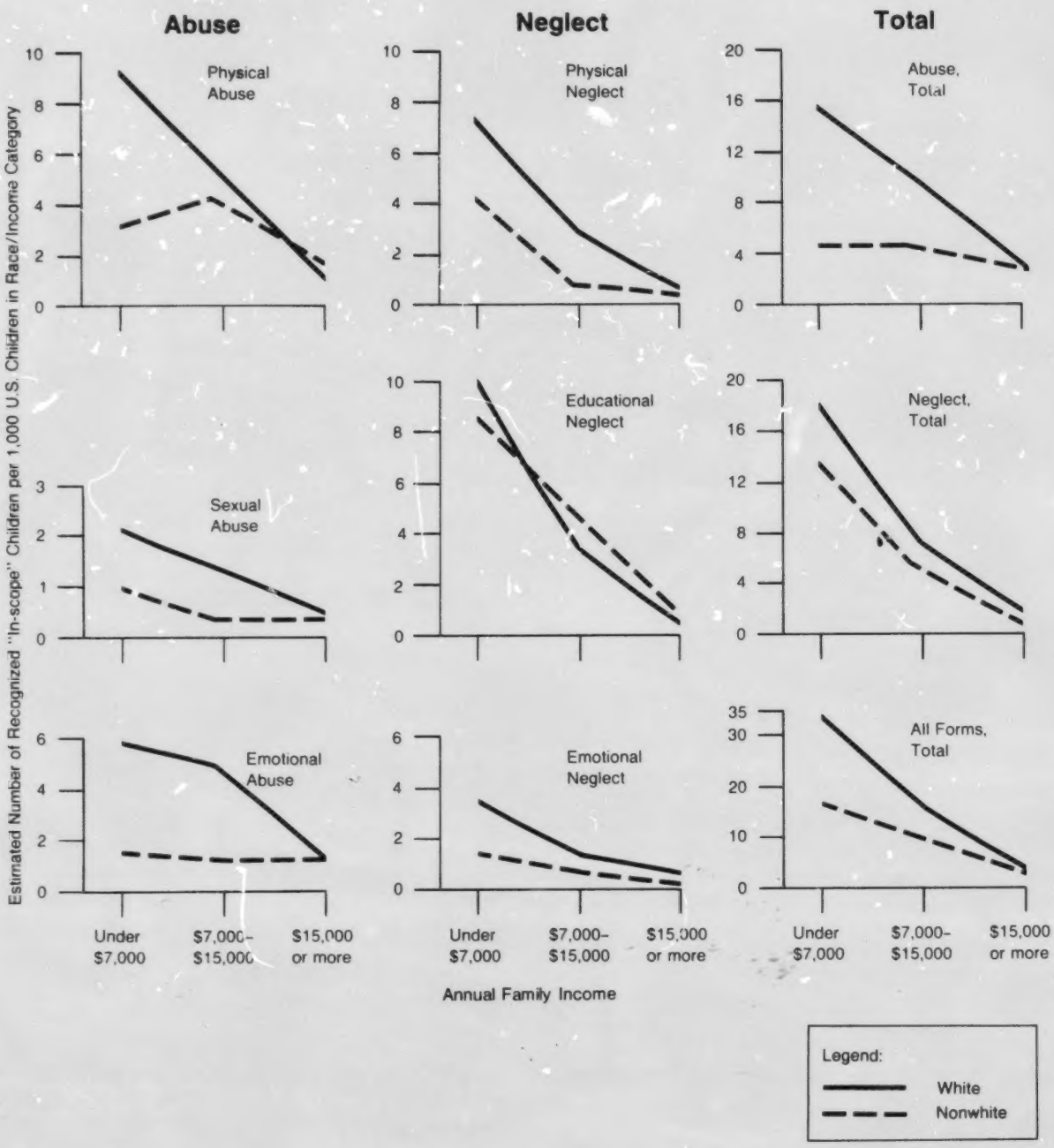
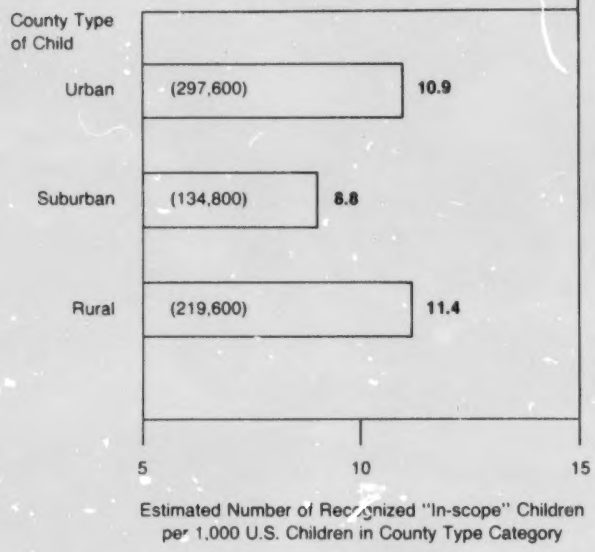


Figure 10. National Incidence Rates and Incidence Numbers [1] by Residence (i.e., County Type [2]) of Maltreated Children [3]



[1] The estimated number of children in each category is presented in parentheses.

[2] U.S. Census definitions for county types are used. "Urban" counties are those located within a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) which contains a central city. "Suburban" counties are located within an SMSA but do not contain a central city. "Rural" counties are not located inside an SMSA.

[3] County type was reported on 100% of the "in-scope" children.

As indicated above, only 21% of the "in-scope" children recognized by non-CPS agencies and reported to the study were also reported to the local CPS agency. The proportion reported to CPS varied considerably across agency types. This information is presented in Figure 13. The key findings are:

- Public schools reported to CPS only 13% of the "in-scope" children which they recognized and reported to the study.
- Public schools reported to CPS more than *twice* as many "in-scope" children as were reported by *any* other agency type.
- Hospitals reported to CPS a higher proportion of the recognized "in-scope" children than any other agency type—but even they reported only 56% of recognized cases.

The data presented in Figures 12 and 13 indicate that public schools are crucial sources of information to CPS agencies regarding maltreated children. In addition, the schools clearly have the potential to report many more such children to CPS.

Not all recognized "in-scope" children necessarily have equal probabilities of being reported to CPS. A key finding in this regard is:

- Neither the child's race nor his/her family's income is related to the probability that his/her "in-scope" maltreatment, once recognized, will be reported to CPS.

In contrast, the child's age makes an important difference, as indicated in Figure 14. The key findings are:

- Preschool children are much more likely, once recognized as "in-scope," to be reported to CPS. Sixty-one percent of recognized preschool children (aged 0–5) are reported. By contrast, only 30% of elementary school age children (aged 6–11) and 24% of adolescents (aged 12–17) recognized "in-scope" children are reported to CPS agencies.
- The actual number of "in-scope" children reported to CPS, however, is nearly constant from one age category to the next.

The severity of the child's injury or impairment also is related to the probability that the maltreated will be reported to CPS. [See Figure 15] The key findings are:

- Almost all (i.e., 87%) recognized "in-scope" fatalities are reported to CPS.
- Among the seriously injured/impaired recognized "in-scope" children, less than one-fourth are reported to CPS.[9]
- Even among the moderately injured/impaired recognized "in-scope" children, less than one-third are reported to CPS.[9]

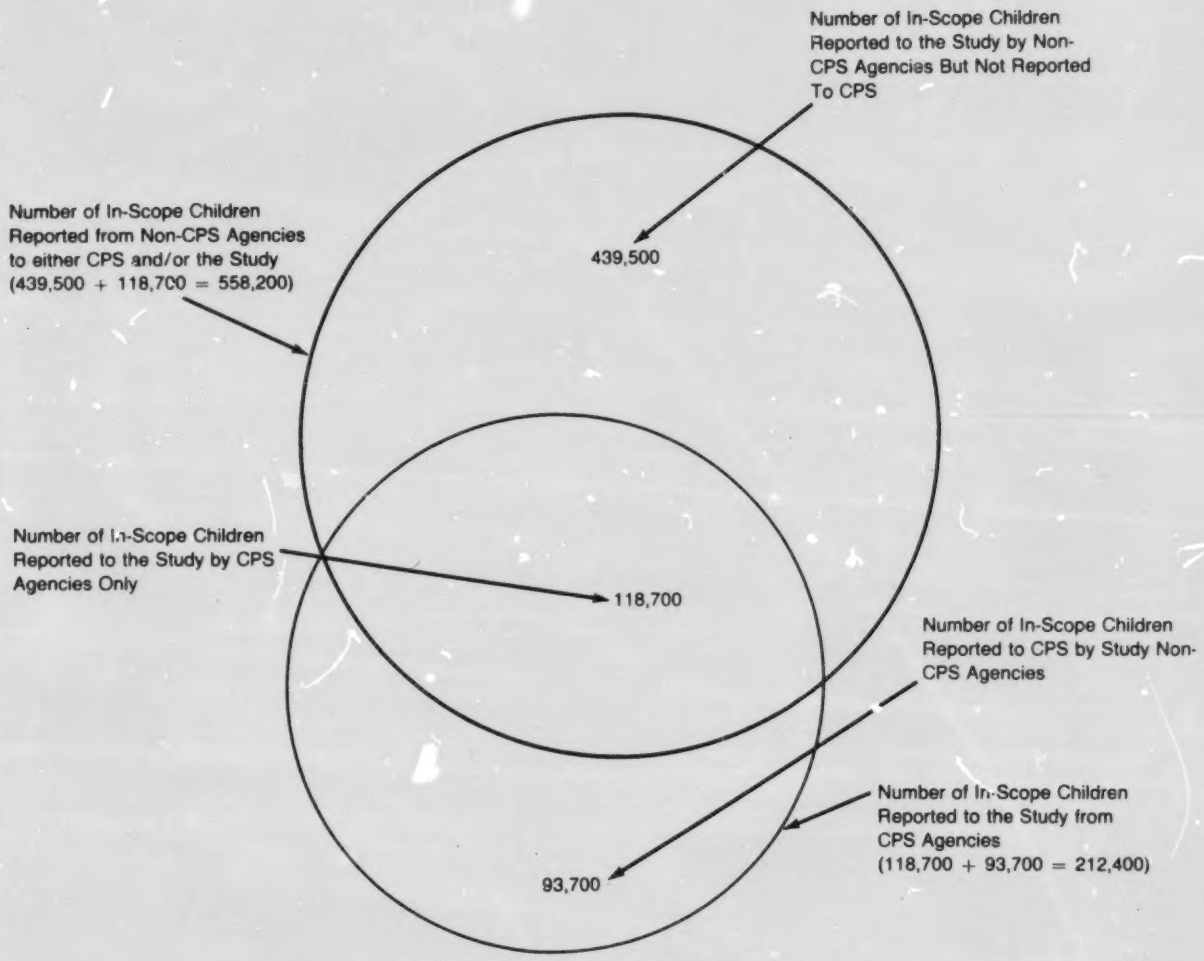
Based on the data collected in the 26 sample counties, an estimate was made of the annual number of children reported to all CPS agencies nationwide. This estimate is presented in Figure 16. The key findings are:

- Nationally, 1,101,500 children are reported to CPS agencies annually as suspected victims of child maltreatment.
- Of those children reported, 43% (i.e., 470,500) are substantiated by the CPS agencies as victims.
- Of the children substantiated, 45% (i.e., 212,400) are "in-scope" in terms of the study's definitions.[10]

[9] These figures indicate that those children *not reported* are as seriously injured/impaired as those reported. The unreported cases are therefore, not trivial.

[10] It is neither surprising nor disconcerting that more than half of the substantiated CPS cases do not meet the study's rigorous definitions which require demonstrable harm in order to count a child as "in-scope." Many children not meeting the study definitions, such as children who have not yet been harmed, but who are judged to be "at risk," of harm, are very appropriately served by CPS agencies.

Figure 11. Sources of Reports of "In-scope" Children to the Study


Number of In-Scope Children Reported to the Study by Non-CPS Agencies But Not Reported To CPS
439,500
Number of In-Scope Children Reported from Non-CPS Agencies to either CPS and/or the Study (439,500 + 118,700 = 558,200)
Number of In-Scope Children Reported to the Study by CPS Agencies Only
118,700
Number of In-Scope Children Reported to CPS by Study Non-CPS Agencies
Number of In-Scope Children Reported to the Study from CPS Agencies (118,700 + 93,700 = 212,400)
93,700

Grant Total in the Two Circles is the Unduplicated Number of Children Reported to the Study by All Sources [1]
439,500 + 118,700 + 93,700 = 652,000

[1] As noted previously in this report, for convenience we have rounded off—652,000—the estimated number of "in-scope" children.

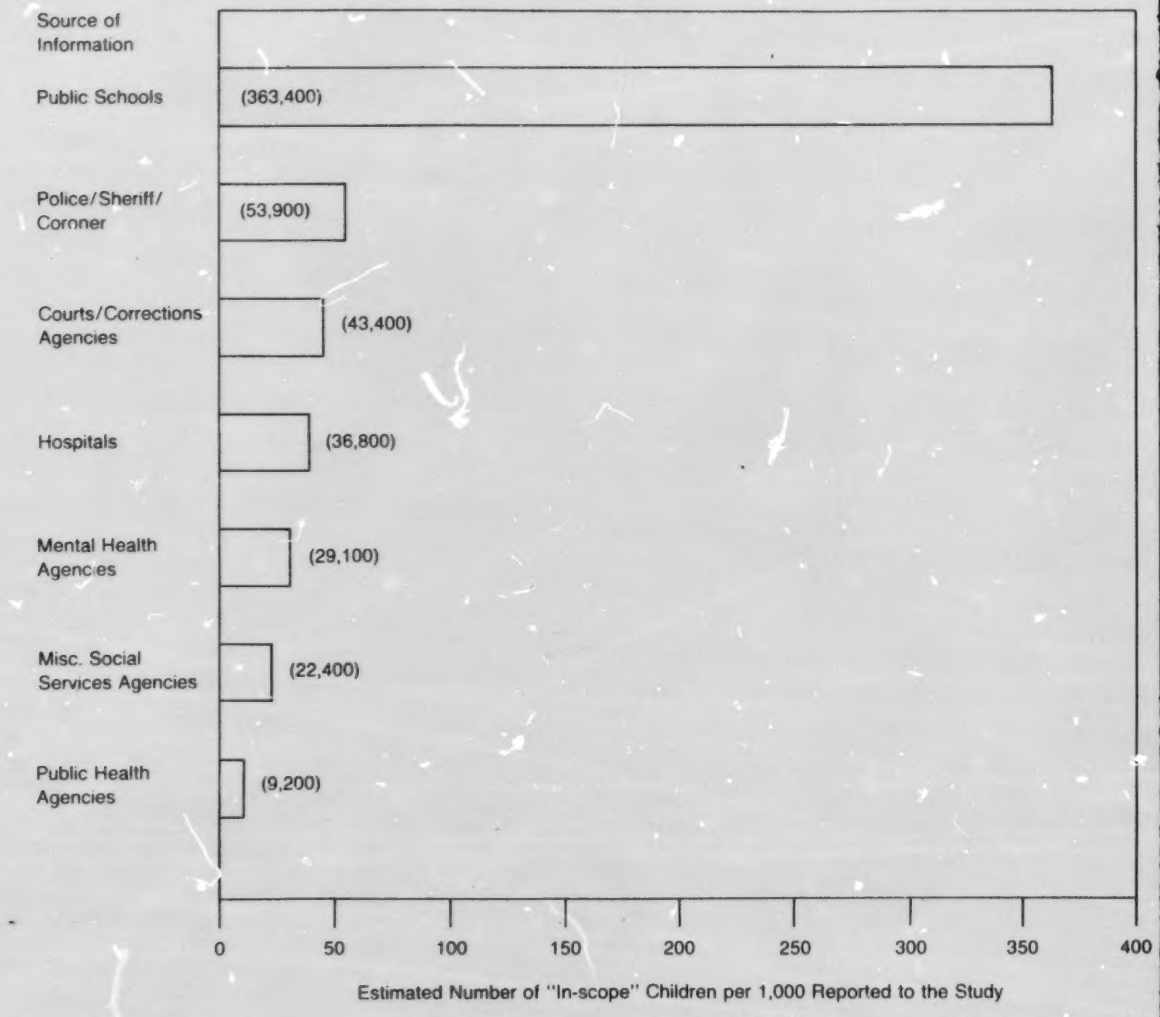
CONCLUSIONS

The National Incidence Study is a benchmark in the examination of the scope of child maltreatment in the United States. It certainly does not provide all the answers to all the questions regarding this serious problem. The study does, however, mark a major step forward in our understanding of magnitude and distributions of child abuse and neglect. Some of the major conclusions we draw from the study are:

- *Child abuse and neglect in the U.S. is a problem of major proportions.*

Even using a very conservative methodology, the study estimates that *at least* 652,000 children are demonstrably harmed by child maltreatment annually. It is very likely that the actual figure is 1,000,000 or more.

Figure 12. Estimated Annual Number of Recognized "In-scope" Children Reported to the Study [1] by Source of Information [2] by Non-CPS Agencies



[1] The children counted as "reported to the study" include (a) children reported directly to the study, but not to the local child protective services (CPS) agency, (b) children not reported directly to the study, but reported to CPS—and thus indirectly reported to the study, and (c) children reported to the study both directly and indirectly (via CPS).

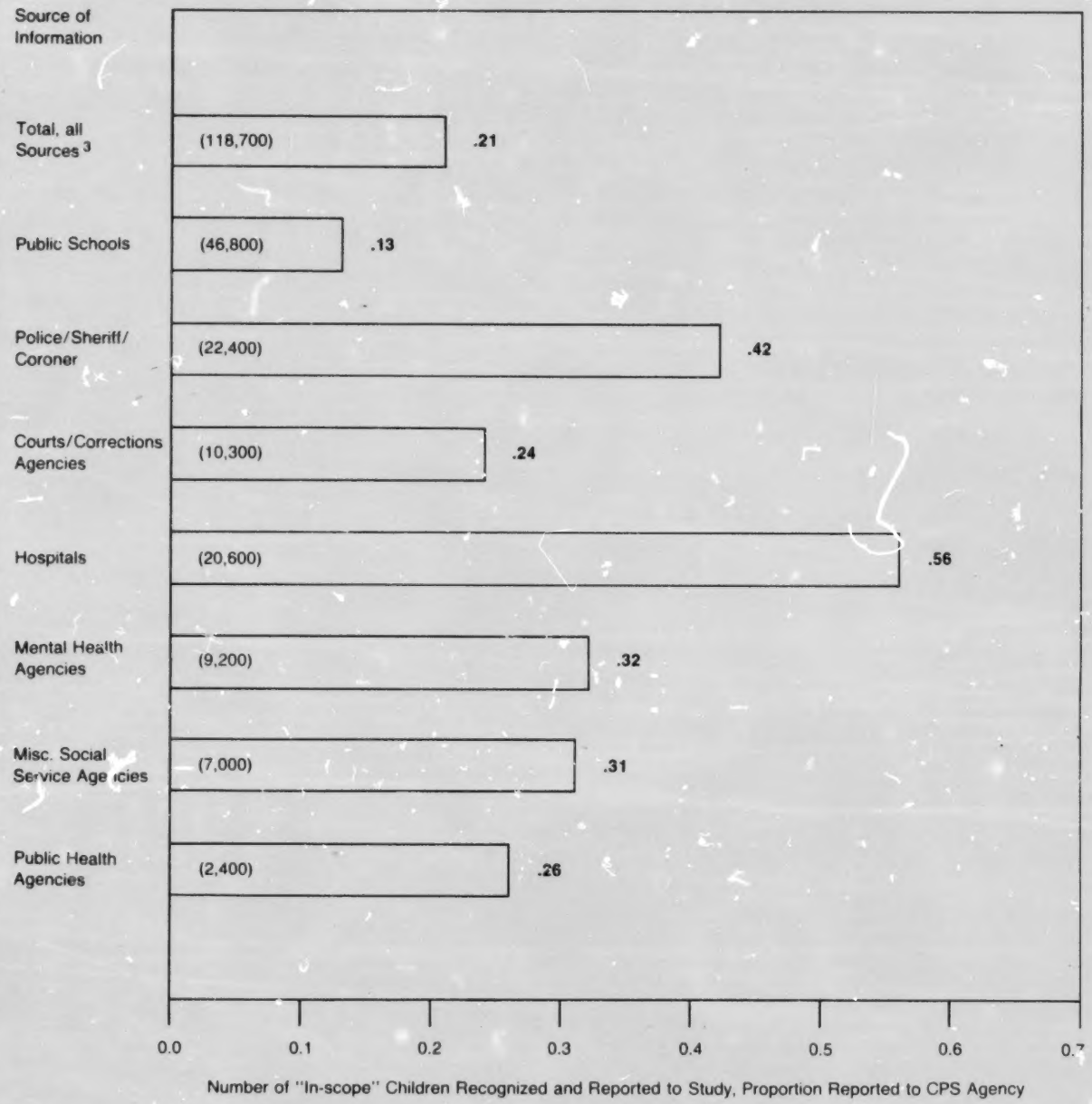
[2] The study counting procedures were designed to avoid double-counting. As a result, some of the estimated numbers presented here are very probably low. For instance, any recognized "in-scope" child reported to the study by a hospital *and* (a) a court or corrections agency or (b) a police/sheriff/coroner or (c) a public health agency was *not* counted as a report from a hospital.

- *Only one-fifth of the children recognized as maltreated by professionals in community institutions (e.g., schools, hospitals) are officially reported to local CPS agencies.*

This finding raises some very troubling questions. The first series of questions revolve around the issue of why only one-fifth, or less, of recognized children are officially reported. Are professionals unaware of the state laws which require them to report? Are professionals "afraid" to "get involved"? Are they unwilling to "make the effort" necessary to cooperate with an official investigation? Are they pessimistic, based on either "bitter experience" or false assumptions, that an official report will result in any significant help for the child or the family?

A second group of questions leaps ahead several years to focus on "what if." That is, what if we are able to discover why the reporting rate is so low among community professionals and we can devise strategies to increase significantly the reporting rate? If, for instance,

Figure 13. Proportion of Annual Number of Recognized "In-scope" Children Reported to CPS Agency[1] by Source of Information[2]

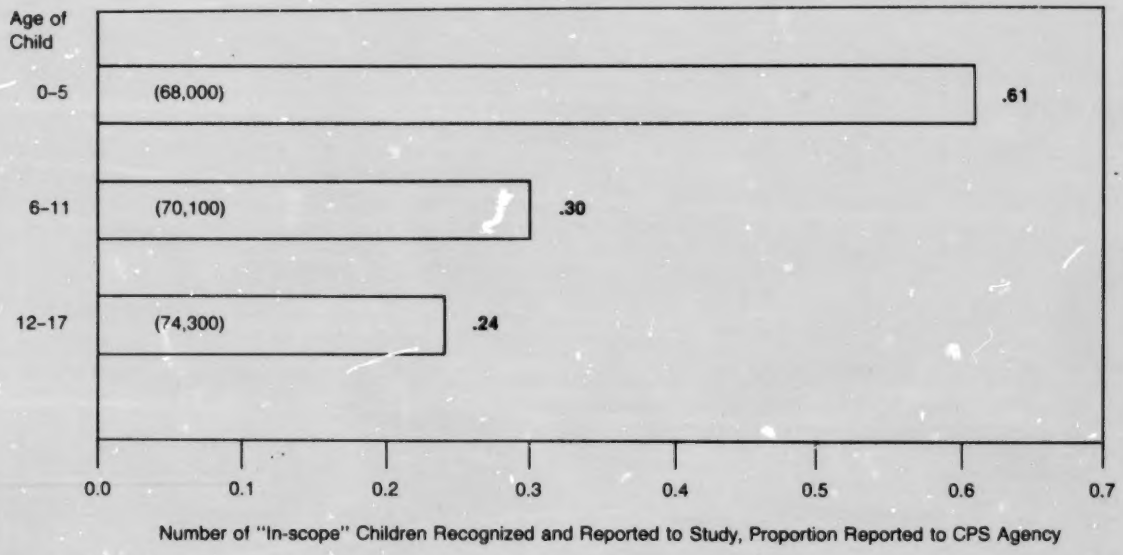


[1] The estimated number of children in each category is presented in parentheses.

[2] The study counting procedures were designed to avoid double-counting. As a result, some of the estimated numbers presented here are very probably low. For instance, any recognized "in-scope" child reported to CPS agency by a public school *and* (a) a court or corrections agency or (b) a police/sheriff/coroner or (c) a public health agency or (d) a hospital was *not* counted as a report from a school. Even though some of the *numbers* may be somewhat low, there is no reason to believe that any of the proportions presented in this figure are low.

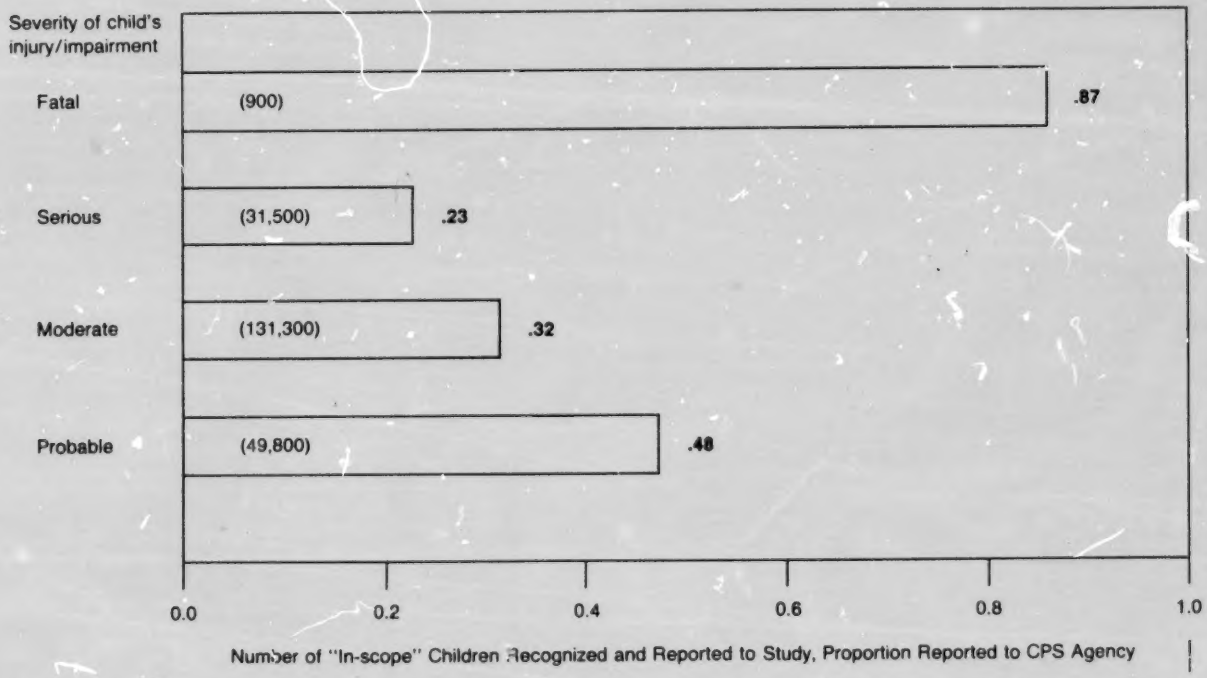
[3] Reports to CPS from "non-study" agencies and private individuals are not included in this total.

Figure 14. Proportion of Annual Number of Recognized "In-scope" Children Reported to CPS Agency by Age of Child [1]



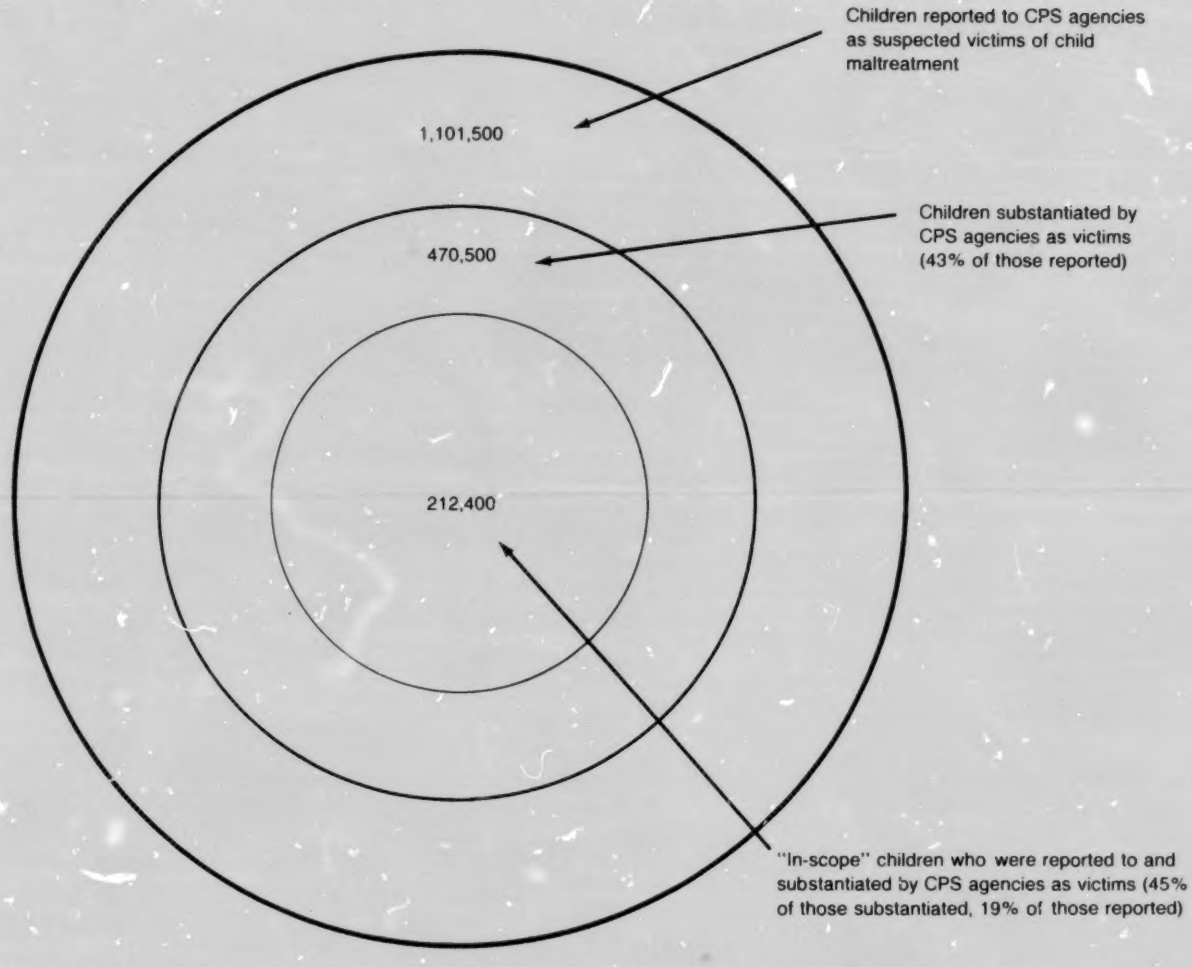
[1] The estimated number of children in each category is presented in parentheses.

Figure 15. Proportion of Annual Number of Recognized "In-scope" Children Reported to CPS Agency, by Severity of Injury/Impairment [1]



[1] The estimated number of children in each category is presented in parentheses.

Figure 16. "In-scope" Children Reported to and Substantiated by CPS Agencies[1]


Children reported to CPS agencies as suspected victims of child maltreatment
1,101,500
Children substantiated by CPS agencies as victims (43% of those reported)
470,500
212,400
"In-scope" children who were reported to and substantiated by CPS agencies as victims (45% of those substantiated, 19% of those reported)

[1] All numbers are estimated annual totals.

professionals reported to CPS three-fifths rather than only one-fifth of the children recognized as maltreated, CPS caseloads of substantiated cases would increase by 50%. How would local CPS agencies, already overburdened, be able to cope with such a dramatic increase in the number of children and families to serve? Would resources be increased or would current resources have to be spread more thinly to cover these additional clients?

- *No category of U.S. children is "immune" from child maltreatment.*

The study discovered some provocative differences among various categories of maltreated children, but these differences do not mask the fact that children of both sexes, of all ages, of all races, of all incomes, and from all geographic settings are harmed by child abuse and neglect.

☆ U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1982 0 - 355-665